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# ‘From a mother to another’: creative experiences of sharing used children’s clothing

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## Biography

Elaine Ritch is a Senior Lecturer in Marketing in the Glasgow School *for* Business and Society at Glasgow Caledonian University. Her research focuses around consumer behaviour, the fashion industry, and sustainability/ethics, and exploring the role of mothering on consumption behaviours. She has published her work in the *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management* and the *Journal of Marketing Management*.

## Abstract

This paper explores how consumers deliberate and incorporate concerns for sustainability in their consumption behaviours, through the lens of children’s-clothing provisioning. Frustrated by the limited acknowledgement for sustainable issues within the UK mass-market fashion retail-sector, the participants reveal engaging with social innovation exchange

initiatives, including networks of used-children's clothing. The research is informed by 28 professionally working mothers who navigate between meeting the social needs of themselves and their family with their growing knowledge for sustainability. The networks are symbolic of shared social values and building supportive communities that provided emotional and practical pathways for family provisioning. The research illustrates how societal discourse around sustainability is growing and how alternative market structures provide routes that appeal to consumers practically, socially and ideologically. Moreover, the research contributes to understanding opportunities that advance the sustainability agenda, for marketing, social innovation initiatives and progressing sustainable businesses.

**Keywords:** sustainability, fashion-consumption, mothering, recycling, upcycling, disposal, redistribution-markets

## Introduction

Societal discourse around sustainability is growing (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014), with businesses acknowledging this growing trend as a means for differentiation and competitive positioning (Weise, Kellner, Lietke, Toporowski & Zielke, 2012). The World Commission for Economic Development outlined sustainable development in 1987 as acknowledging that resources are finite and that future development (of economy and people) should address sustainability, particularly as industrialisation and population growth have culminated in environmental impairment and increasing inequality disparities (WCED, 1987). This WCED conceptualisation is commonly used to underpin what should inform sustainable production and consumption. The discourse around sustainability has reached the attention of academic researchers, who have adopted a multiplicity of approaches to better understand how concern for sustainability is stimulated and consequently acted upon. Emerging from ethical

consumption streams, sustainability research has looked at how ethical concerns are applied and navigated in both mainstream and niche markets, spanning a number of consumption contexts such as food, fashion, transport, tourism. However, there is little understanding of how consumers bypass consumption markets to adopt a more sustainable acquisition and disposal process, particularly for fashion consumption; rather, research has considered how consumers view ethical debates within the fashion industry, such as the exploitation of garment-workers and the inclusion of child labour and incorporate this into consumption behaviour. More recent research has considered worker conditions along with environmental concerns under the remit of sustainability (McNeil & Moore, 2015; Jung & Jin, 2016), but again focused on consumption behaviours, rather than seeing the process of acquisition and disposal holistically. Although this research is useful for advising in how businesses can construct marketing that responds to concerns for sustainability, this does not consider that fashion consumption needs are idiographic, as are consumers knowledge for sustainability and their concern for the consequences. Therefore, this research adopts an interpretive approach with unstructured interviews, that introduce concepts of sustainability through presenting garment labels that describe a facet of sustainable production. The aim here is to better understand how consumers define, deliberate and incorporate concerns for sustainability, with a focus on acquiring and disposing of fashion within the families setting.

The fashion industry has been criticised for its slow response to recognising the need for sustainability (McNeil & Moore, 2015), despite the growth of sustainable options in other market contexts (Luchs, Walker, Naylor, Rose, Caitlin, Gau, Kaptain, Mish, Ozanne, Phipps, Simpson, Subrahmanyam & Weaver, 2011). Non-government organisations (NGO's) campaign to inform consumers of what constitutes unsustainable practice, including allegations of garment-worker exploitation as well as the environmental impact of low-cost and more frequent production (Allwood, Laursen, de Rodriguez & Broken, 2006). The

current fast-fashion business model that dominates UK fashion retailing focuses on lower prices and speed to market, where the cycle of new fashions introduced in-stores has been reduced to around 6 weeks, conditioning social needs by encouraging more frequent consumption (Jung & Jin, 2016). Children's clothing has also reduced in price, with UK supermarkets competing to provide full school uniforms for as little as £4 (Smithers, 2014). This low pricing is reflected in the garments' quality, which coupled with the rapid cycle of new fashion styles encourages notions of disposability (Harris, Roby & Dibb, 2016), leading to concerns for over-consumption within a throwaway society (Krystallis, Grunert, de Barcellos, Perrea, & Verbeke, 2009). Consequently, marketing encourages more frequent impulse consumption with low price points, limited stock and flash price reductions, rather than focusing on sustainable production for creating value and encouraging the longevity of scarce resources (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014).

There are some UK high street fashion retailers who address sustainability within their marketing campaigns. For example, Marks & Spencer's (M&S) promote their Plan A commitment (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014) which rewards consumers who donate their unwanted garments to Oxfam with an M&S voucher. Similarly, H&M offers a voucher for clothes recycled instore and Zara encourages recycling without a reward. Nevertheless, fashion retailer recycling initiatives have been scrutinised as tokenistic, particularly as the impetus is to encourage more consumption which exacerbates the cycle of production and disposal (Gould, 2017). It could be argued that consumers are being misled as to what underpins sustainability and without guidance on the implications of production for sustainability (Phipps, Ozanne, Luchs, Subrahmanyam, Kaptain, Catlin, Gau, Walker, Rose, Simpson & Weaver, 2012; Prothero et al., 2011) consumers will continue to passively purchase low priced fashion. Given that some fashion retailers launch 24 new collections

annually (Gould, 2017), marketing seems to contribute to fashion unsustainability as opposed to providing practical solutions.

This paper responds to calls for research to better understand how to advance the sustainability agenda (Krystallis et al., 2016; McDonagh & Prothero, 2014) through exploring the acquisition and disposal of fashion clothing within the family setting. One of the early questions in designing this research focused on exploring whether growing interest in sustainability had impacted other consumption behaviours? As previous research on sustainability had found growing interest for sustainable issues was stimulated by motherhood (Prothero & Fitchett, 2000), particularly for organic produce to avoid young children digesting chemicals (Cairns, Johnston & MacKendrick, 2013; Grønhøj & Ölander, 2007), mothers were considered an appropriate focus for research. The data revealed post-consumption networks of used-children's clothing that are currently underreported in academic research. Marketing literature focuses on immediate consumption behaviours, rather than examining how long clothing is retained, what leads to disposal and the choice of disposal route (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). The data was collected in Edinburgh and emerges from a culture that has embraced low cost retailers alongside the existence of second-hand markets, such as charity shops and jumble sales (random second-hand goods for sale, often hosted by a charity). This means that consumers are not reliant of second-hand garments, as the cost of clothing is low; also, it suggests that second-hand commodity exchange is socially acceptable for some consumer cohorts. Consequently, the research offers an insight into how consumer decision-making navigates the issues surrounding sustainable consumption.

With little research considering post-consumption, the literature review identified Albinsson & Perera (2009), who investigate post-consumption behaviours within a concise framework

of five disposal modes: sharing, exchanging (trading), donating, recycling and ridding (to landfill), that captures the mains options available to consumers. This framework was selected to reflect upon the experience through a specific lens, in this case mothering networks and children's clothing provisioning.

This paper contributes to the marketing literature on sustainability through exploring social innovation exchange initiatives that enable consumers to adopt strategies that meets their social needs with their moral ideology. Social innovative initiatives often emerge from grassroots movements that seek to provide practical solutions to social problems (Saji and Ellingstad, 2016). Collaborative-consumption is one such example that falls within the remit of the sharing economy, where consumers assume the initiative to extend the ownership of commodities within a social setting (Martin, Upman & Budd, 2015). Martin et al. (2015) state that collaborative-consumption and the sharing-economy are terms that tend to be used interchangeably and both emerge from the same ethos of grassroots initiatives that disrupt traditional business models to advance the sustainability agenda (Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2015; Heinrichs, 2013). This is important, not only for identifying motivations and drivers that lead to participating in used-clothing networks but highlighting the sustainability agenda through making the most of scarce resources and reducing textile waste in landfill sites. The research provides guidance on how these informal networks offer potential for social innovation initiatives and sustainable business methods that appeal to the ethically concerned consumer, through fostering shared clothing networks that span family and friend circles. Although it is important to note that the used-clothing networks were primarily orientated around children's clothing, the anticipated altruistic perceptions of used-clothing networks have the potential to transfer into other sectors through creative social innovative partnerships (Sali & Ellingstad, 2016). As such, marketing can play a role in situating sustainability through value creation (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014).

The paper is structured as follows: the literature review begins by contextualising sustainability within current fashion retailing and is followed by exploring consumer efforts to temper the impact of their consumption through anti-consumption movements and collaborative-consumption. The research design is then established before presenting the findings and concluding comments.

## Current structures of fashion retailing

Krystallis et al. (2016) state that production and consumption are central to progressing food sustainability; this is equally important for the highly competitive fashion industry, which focuses on price and speed to market. This fast-fashion business model represents the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) of normalised behaviours that informs assumptions of consumption in Western societies (Pirages & Ehrlich, 1974) and this encourages frequent consumption to reflect rapidly evolving fashion trends. This economic rationale has consequences for sustainability (Krystallis et al., 2016), lower prices facilitate the acquisition of new garments, but impact on garment quality; a further consequence is that there is little incentive to repair or repurpose damaged garments (Luchs et al., 2011). Worn garments are perceived to have little value and are disposed to landfill, where textiles contribute to climate-change and the release of toxic substances that prohibit soil fertility and infiltrate water supplies (Rivoli, 2009). Not only is landfill space nearing capacity (Lee & Sevier, 2008), but much of it is exported, often to developing countries imposing financial implications for sorting and managing the waste. It is estimated that 350,000 tonnes of used-clothing ends in UK landfill annually, despite the materials having commercial value for recycling into new garments or used for non-clothing purposes (WRAP, 2012). Further, used-textiles have the potential to provide an income of £140 million to UK charities (WRAP, 2012). This situates value creation within used-garments, offering the ability to appeal to consumers through



benefits for the wider society that include protecting scarce resources and supporting developing countries which are confronted by allegations of both garment-worker exploitation and the ‘dumping’ of waste.

Recycling discourse in other contexts is increasingly publicised as consumers are asked to consider what they send to landfill, as evidenced in the plastic bag charge (DEFRA, 2018), calls to tax disposable cups used in coffee shops (Laville, 2018) and campaigns for supermarkets to reduce plastic packaging (Sandhu, 2018). Further, within households, consumers are very much involved in recycling waste as supported by local authority doorstep collections (Prothero, Dobsha, Freund, Kilbourne, Luchs, Ozanne & Thøgersen, 2011). Yet similar conversations are not included in fashion discourse; the rapid cycle of inexpensive and low-quality fashion collections encapsulated in the DSP propel notions of disposability, while the majority of fashion retailers rely on accelerating consumption for profit rather than considering more sustainable ways to create value. It could be argued that the fashion industry is missing the opportunity to create marketing content that addresses the fashionability of the sustainable agenda.

With limited alternative options to the DSP on the UK high street for fashion-conscious and affordable fashion that acknowledges sustainability (McNeil & Moore, 2015), consumers may feel restricted in their ability to adopt consumption that is sympathetic to sustainability. Yet, research has found that fashion consumers feel able to express preferences for sustainability in other consumption contexts (Luchs et al., 2011; Joy, Sherry, Venkatesh, Wang, & Chan, R. 2012; Ritch, 2015). This situates the potential for fashion retailers to encourage sustainable lifestyles and consumption, as eclipsed in the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) (Phipps et al., 2012; Prothero et al., 2011). The NEP supports the sustainability agenda, with sympathetic production, consumption and disposal that protects

scarce resources and the workers involved in production, but does not diminish opportunities for developing future economies.

Academic research has reported on a number of socially innovative strategies adopted by consumers in an effort to apply their distaste for the DSP: anti-consumption; voluntary-simplicity; and collaborative-consumption (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). The anti-consumption movement represents a protest, such as boycotting or brand rejection (Ozanne & Ballantine, 2010), in an effort to avoid what they believe to be unjust or detrimental market structures as represented in the DSP. Previous research found that this limits options for purchasing fashion, especially as consumers, will not sacrifice their appearance for what they perceive as unfashionable garments and ambiguous allegations of exploitation that cannot be substantiated (Ritch & Brownlie, 2016; Phipps et al., 2012; Shaw & Newholm, 2004). Voluntary-simplicity adopts a similar ideology to reject the DSP, but focuses on reducing overall consumption (Luchs et al., 2011; Shaw & Newholm, 2002) as an effort to consider the resources required for production. Again, this can involve self-sacrifice and it does not take into account that there will always be instances in which consumers require new products, both from a practical and a desired perspective (Albinsson & Perera, 2012). For example, children's continued growth perpetrates new clothing consumption (Ritch & Brownlie, 2016). This means that consumers may suspend their resistance to the DSP to meet their children's growth needs, amid the temptation of low prices in supermarkets and value fashion retailers. However, some consumers are moving towards socially innovative market structures that support the NEP, such as collaborative-consumption.

### *Collaborative-consumption*

Collaborative-consumption involves consumers sharing resources (Belk, 2007), providing alternative and sustainable options that are sympathetic to the NEP. Collaborative-

consumption reduces the demand for scarce resources and production (Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Phipps et al., 2012) by extending the lifespan of commodities (Phipps et al., 2012; Prothero et al., 2011). Within families, sharing is normally practised, making the most of available resources, but collaborative-consumption extends to a wider circle of friends and the wider community. There is little research that examines sharing outwith immediate personal spheres to examine sharing within the public sphere (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; 2009). Albinsson & Perera (2012) describe two types of collaborative-consumption: redistribution-markets and the sharing-economy. Redistribution-markets of exchanging/trading used-clothing are expanding through online platforms, including eBay and Gumtree (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Luchs et al., 2011). This enables consumers to obtain used-goods at reduced prices, as well as selling products they no longer require to recoup their expenses (Luchs et al., 2011). Redistribution-markets are also evident within monetary free transactions. For example, Freecycle enables consumers to advertise unwanted goods to others without a cost, again encouraging products to be used for longer (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Prothero et al., 2011). There are a number of initiatives that respond to the sharing-economy; Airbnb is the largest sharing-initiative globally, and at local levels, there are car-sharing collectives (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Prothero et al., 2011) and tool libraries; both offer examples of a service/product that is required for specific and limited occasions, which is similar to children's clothing. The sharing-economy allows community consumption to benefit a number of consumers (Albinsson & Perera, 2012), as illustrated in two research papers that examine the sharing-economy through the lens of a toy library which allows members to borrow toys in return for a membership fee and library support duties (Phipps et al., 2012; Ozanne & Ballantine, 2010). The toy library illustrates the potential for sharing resources within communities, allowing families' access to age appropriate toys in an affordable

acquisition process. This is something that is especially important given the expense required in child rearing.

Redistribution-markets and the sharing-economy both situate value through '*rethinking the entire consumption cycle*' (Luchs et al., 2011, p 10) personally and socially, providing consumers who are concerned with sustainability with alternative options that appeals to their moral ideology. Both also encourage social interactions that deepen relationships and communities (Albinsson & Perera, 2009), as found in the research examining the toy library initiative whereby participation acted as a stimulus for community cohesiveness. Community cohesiveness was also found in free-sharing events by Albinsson & Perera (2012), who explore the factors that encourages participation in collaborative-consumption and how this informs community theory. Community theory is considered as geographical and relational, occurring within a locality (for example a city), emerging from human relationships or a common purpose. Communities forge from connections, including family and friends and extending to groups with shared values and norms that have shared expectations of behaviours (Albinsson & Perera, 2012). Albinsson & Perera (2012) identify how items which were shared through the events continued to be shared post-acquisition, which they explain as possessions having usefulness beyond the consumer which '*widen[s] the circle and pleasure of ownership and utility*' (p. 309). They also found the practice extended to the sharing of skills, such as face-painting, massage, hairdressing and garden services. Albinsson & Perera (2012) explain that this locates the conceptualisation of exchange within the sharing-economy, that includes utilitarian and symbolic values, where the motivation to participate is not only for the acquisition of commodities, but socially through a shared ideology. Consequently, collaborative-consumption encourages behavioural change, enhanced by the level of control transferred from businesses to consumers.

The circle of collaborative-consumption also involves consumers disposing of goods they no longer require. Supporting collaborative-consumption is the expanding market for used-goods, found on the Internet (Albinsson & Perera, 2012; Luchs et al., 2011), allowing consumers greater opportunities for disposal. The factors which lead to post-choice decision-making are likely to depend on the consumption context and the individual consumer. For example, routes that are easiest to fit into everyday lifeworlds may be selected due to convenience. Albinsson & Perera (2009) found a reluctance to engage with disposal routes that required more time or financial outlay, leading to charity-shop donations or disposal to landfill. Similarly, Bianchi & Birtwistle (2012) found that disposal routes were influenced by the original price paid: higher priced garments were more likely to be donated to charity than sent to landfill (Albinsson & Perera, 2009). Yet, Lamberton & Rose (2012) found that disposal involved an emotional aspect and to combat this, some of their participants adopted strategies to distance themselves emotionally from commodities prior to disposal, including gifting to friends or relatives to maintain ties with the object, or putting commodities into storage prior to disposal to create distance. Albinsson & Perera (2009) term consumers who do this as ‘packrats’ and stress how disposal depends on the value or meaning attached to the product, such as useful, emotional, symbolic or evoking a memory. Nevertheless, a lack of storage space may dictate disposal (Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Albinsson & Perera, 2009), especially as the needs and wants of children evolve (Prothero et al., 2011), and as children frequently outgrow clothing there is little need to retain garments (Ritch, 2015). Participating in collaborative-consumption may provide assurance that donated children’s garments and related products are passed onto others with a similar mind-set, finding solace in shared values and making the most of environmental resources. This focuses post-choice decision-making within notions of exchange, as located within marketing theory (Ozanne & Ballantine, 2010). Exchange value emerges from notions of self-interest and altruism

(Prothero et al., 2011; Albinsson & Perera, 2009) that are represented in disposal events, such as used-clothing markets or exchanging/trading communities (Albinsson & Perera, 2009).

The implication from the literature is that consumers are using their initiative to adopt sustainability by actively controlling consumption, commodity use and disposal on their own terms by redistributing and sharing-commodities. This leads into the consumer versus citizen debate (Gabriel & Lang, 1995), which suggests that consumers are passive in their consumption behaviours, whereas citizens seek to hold businesses to account for the social and environmental impact of their activities. Consumers may not have any control over what occurs in production, but once they have purchased commodities, they can control the next stage by extending the lifespan and ensuring responsible disposal. This means that consumers must prioritise outcomes for external (community and sustainability) factors over their own or family's needs and wants (Phipps et al., 2012). Although Prothero et al. (2011) assert that this may lead to alternative consumption that reflects sustainability, it could be argued that this will emerge from socially innovative exchange initiatives which begin in consumer led movements. Social values may prohibit the desire to purchase used-goods with reducing fast-fashion pricing, particularly for younger consumers who are tempted by the lure of new and inexpensive consumption within a '*throwaway society*' (Albinsson & Perera, 2009) as evident in the rapid growth of young fast-fashion retailers such as Boohoo.com and Misguided (Mintel, 2016); yet there are other cohorts who still recall a time when people tended to re-use and repair commodities due to the scarcity of resources and the expense of consumption, and see this as offering more sustainable pathways. Juxtaposed within this, consumers absorb information that may facilitate the transfusion into other contexts: therefore, recycling of waste or concerns for single use plastic may make consumers consider the disposal of other products no longer required and which route is the most sustainable (Phipps et al., 2012). As illustrated in the literature presented above, personal behaviours are

influenced by societal behaviours that empower consumers to be active agents and equip them to apply creative and innovative solutions to overcome situational constraints (Phipps et al., 2012). Consequently, this paper addresses the following research questions:

- How do consumers navigate current fashion retailing when purchasing children's clothing to satisfy their social and ideological needs and wants?
- Do sustainability messages influence the consumption, use and disposal of children's clothing?

## Methodology

The data for this paper emerged from a broader study exploring how fashion was acquired within the family setting. The narratives emerged from the mother's perspective, to capture her lived experience (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989) of juggling everyday practicalities alongside the thoughts and feelings that motivated fashion consumption and disposal routes. Mothers were sought as women are more likely to be responsible for household chores, including purchasing clothing for the children (Grønhøj & Ölander, 2007). The interviews supported this, as only one participant stated that the father was actively involved in their children's fashion consumption. Additionally, previous literature identified motherhood as stimulating interest in sustainability (Prothero & Fitchett, 2000), leading to preferences for sustainably produced food to avoid chemical applications during production (Cairns et al., 2013; Grønhøj and Ölander, 2007). Considering this was a cohort already attuned to sustainability, it was questioned whether concern for sustainability extended to fashion contexts?

Sampling was purposive, convenience was followed by snowballing to elicit women from similar backgrounds to help determine commonalities and themes (Albinsson & Perera,

2009), leading to interviews that lasted between 30 and 90 minutes with 28 professionally working mothers who lived in and around Edinburgh; transcribing provided 647 pages of data. Edinburgh is typical of other UK cities with a spectrum of similar retailers, such as John Lewis, M&S, H&M and Primark. Additionally, the suburbs contain a plethora of charity shops, such as Cancer Research and the British Heart Foundation; both accept and sell second-hand clothing and other second-hand goods. This means that the participants had a selection of retailers conveniently located for purchasing children's clothing within a variety of price ranges along with children's clothing available in supermarkets, such as Asda and Tesco. Further, there are numerous options for purchasing second-hand clothing, including specific children's second-hand clothing sales, such as those organised by the National Childcare Trust. When this occurs within established networks, purchasing second-hand clothing is normalised, reducing stigma.

The participant characteristics are presented in Table 1. The interviews began by asking how fashion came into the home and the concept of sustainability was introduced through garment labels from UK fashion retailers which described sustainable concepts, such as organic cotton or polyester made from recycled plastic bottles. The labels could be considered as sustainable marketing, which *'create, communicate and deliver value to consumers in such a way that both natural and human capital are preserved or enhanced throughout'* (Martin & Schouten, 2014, p.16, cited in McDonagh & Prothero, 2014, p.1199). These concepts stimulated discussions around sustainability and led to narratives describing post-consumption behaviours. The data was transcribed verbatim before being analysed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the experience within the context in which it occurs (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This approach is appropriate when focusing on *'meaning and sense making'* within a specific context to understand the lived experience (Smith et al., 2009, p.45). IPA is interpretive, employing double hermeneutics: as the participants attempt



to make sense of their behaviours, the researcher analyses' their interpretation to find deeper insight (Smith et al., 2009). Originally, themes were identified using three analytical lenses: descriptive, linguistic and conceptual, to better understand the application of meaning. This was applied initially to participants 10 and 20, as they had both experienced significant change after becoming mothers: participant-10 had become less ethical due to experiencing a reduction in her finances, restricting her perceived ability to purchase sustainable produced goods and participant-20 had become more sustainable due to concern for societal issues along with avoiding food containing chemicals, sacrificing the purchase of new commodities (such as clothing, a car and toys) to afford sustainably produced food. Having revealed the extent of the shared networks, the data were then sorted into Albinsson & Perera's (2009) disposal framework. Analysis revealed the extent of pathways that enabled the redistribution of children's clothing to be passed within formal and informal networks. An example of the coding process can be found in Table 2 below:

*Table 1: The participants' characteristics*

Participant number (age)	Occupation (work commitment: full-time/ part-time/ number of hours worked per week)	Family structure (age of children and gender female and (m) male)	Marital status
1 (41)	Befriending service coordinator (32 hours)	14 (f), 11 (m), 8 (f), 8 (f)	Married/cohabitating
2 (28)	Probationary teacher (full-time)	8 (f)	Single
3 (43)	Lecturer (full-time)	8 (f), 5 (m)	Married/cohabitating
4 (43)	Manager (full-time)	10 (m), 7 (f)	Married/cohabitating
5 (42)	Lecturer (part-time)	8 (m), 6 (f)	Married/cohabitating
6 (37)	Financial services compliance officer (part-time)	12 (f), 9 (f)	Married/cohabitating
7 (40)	Admin secretary (part-time)	9 (m), 6 (f)	Married/cohabitating
8 (47)	Company director (45 hours)	9 (f), 6 (m)	Married/cohabitating
9 (34)	Student guidance advisor (18 hours)	3 (f), 1 (f)	Married/cohabitating
10 (48)	Tourism (part-time)	9 (f), 6 (f)	Married/cohabitating
11 (39)	Primary teacher (17.5 hours)	6 (f), 4 (f)	Married/cohabitating
12 (39)	Solicitor (22.5 hours)	8 (m), 5 (f)	Married/cohabitating
13 (47)	Police operations coordinator (18 hours)	10 (f), 7 (m)	Single
14 (36)	Secondary school teacher (3 days per week)	3 (f), 2 (m), 2 (f)	Married/cohabitating
15 (38)	Book keeper/administrator (21 hours)	6 (m), 4 (f)	Cohabitating
16 (39)	Accounts assistant (28 hours)	4 (m), 2 (f)	Married/cohabitating
17 (28)	Retail (8 hours)	8 (f), 4 (m)	Married/cohabitating
18 (40)	Physiotherapy lecturer (19.5 hours)	2 (f), pregnant	Married/cohabitating
19 (42)	University administrator (18.5 hours)	6 (m), 5 (m)	Married/cohabitating
20 (39)	Social researcher (16 hours)	6 (f), 4 (f), 6 months (f)	Married/cohabitating
21 (34)	Chartered accountant (28 hours)	15 (m), 12 (f), 4 (m), 3 (m)	Married/cohabitating

22 (48)	Solicitor/mediator (full-time)	16 (m), 14 (f), 11 (m)	Married/cohabitating
23 (42)	Senior lecturer (full-time)	2 (f)	Married/cohabitating
24 (36)	Research administrator (full-time)	5 (m)	Single
25 (40)	Lecturer (18 hours)	9 (m), 5 (f)	Married/cohabitating
26 (43)	Administrator (28 hours)	4 (m)	Married/cohabitating
27 (44)	Lecturer (21 hours)	6 (m), 3 (f)	Married/cohabitating
28 (42)	Solicitor (full-time)	6 (m), 3 (m), 11 months (m)	Married/cohabitating

*Table 2: An example of the coding process*

Transcript	Descriptive, <i>linguistic</i> , <u>conceptual</u>
<p>Now, that, we are very ethical and we do think about, where they come from and who makes them and if they are made in China, in factories with children, and I love the recycling aspect, the girl I was thinking about has got two brothers, they have a girl and two boys and she is two years older than my eldest</p> <p><i>Ok</i></p> <p>They pretty much pass a lot of girl clothes to us,</p> <p><i>Right</i></p> <p>And she has two French cousins, that's the baby (goes to get the baby from the garden), ..... who are, who are two girls, so we get clothes from the two cousins, too, [friend of the family's daughter], to us.</p>	<p>Stating up front their (the family's) ethical approach, provenance is an important aspect, where clothes come from, and how they were made. <i>Interesting to note that she starts by stating the family is 'very ethical', but later on is less confident: 'we try to be a bit ethical'. She is speaking quite quickly at this stage, describing how clothes come into the home and who is involved. Very confident in expressing her ethical stance.</i> Makes an immediate link with exploitation in developing countries and child labour. Sees this as something to avoid. <u>Made in China suggests connotations of exploitative practice.</u> Clothes are passed down from a family who also have three children, the daughter is the right age for growing out of clothes and aligning with the eldest daughter in this family. <u>Familial norms are unquestioned by the children and endorsed by the clothing being handed to the family.</u> All the girls clothes are passed to the family, assuming that the girl does not get hand me down clothes as she has two elder brothers, so the clothes will only have been worn by one child. The clothes are also passed from the friend of the family's cousins, through the girl and then to this family. Assuming there is a lot of clothes, hand me downs from three girls to this family. <i>'Very little shopping in shops': against the norm of accessing fashion from the retailers, clothing is more of a shared commodity.</i> Does not need to acquire new clothing, due to the amount passed down from family friends. This reduces the time for shopping and also saves money. The clothes handed to the family are used for all three of her children, who are all the same gender. So, the clothes are used by around six children before being moved on. The baby has worn clothing handed down from her sisters.</p>

## 1 Illustration of collaborative-consumption and disposal routes

This research examines consumer peer-to-peer redistribution-networks of used-children's clothing identified within a broader study of family acquisition of clothing. The study explored perceptions of sustainability and related behaviours within the family setting and how this was applied to clothing. The participants' lacked confidence in sustainable fashion labels, explaining that price and style were more important than sustainability when purchasing from retailers; however, post-consumption behaviours were more carefully thought through. This was due to active involvement in recycling household waste (Prothero et al., 2011; Ritch et al., 2009) where the concept of reuse and avoiding what is sent to

landfill was routine within their everyday lifeworlds. This meant that disposal routes were thought through and involved participating in collaborative-consumption. It is important to note that participants had a different approach to purchasing clothing for themselves and for their children, and this paper reports only on practice relating to the children. The main difference in their approaches was due to the children's growth necessitating new clothes; whereas, for themselves, purchasing fashion was less frequent and there was a preference for enjoying the experience as well as for higher quality fashion. The narratives revealed that children's clothing was passed within informal networks of friends and family, as well as participating in formal networks, such as charitable organisations or selling garments/commodities through redistribution-markets. This is displayed in Table 3 below:

*Table 3: Distribution and purchasing of used-clothing by participants*

Participant number	Passing children's clothes to friends/family	Receiving children's clothes	Selling on clothing/ freecycle and charity donations	Buying-used clothing
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
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9				
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25				
26				
27				
28				

The table above illustrates the four main routes for acquiring and disposing of children's clothes, and some of the participants were involved in all behaviours, whereas five were not involved at all; for those participants, the discussion did not arise at all and as the data was stimulated by the sustainable concepts on the garment-labels, collaborative-consumption was not prompted during any interview. No participant admitted to throwing clothes into landfill: damaged clothing was recycled as rags or sent for downcycling at charity shops. Not all participants received used-clothing, often because they did not know children older than their own who could donate clothes they had outgrown. This could be illustrative of mothers spending less time in community social events due to work commitments. The four routes fell into formal and informal structures, and examples of this are:

Formal: Freecycle; charity-shop; local nearly new sale; eBay; National Child Trust; organised charity collections

Informal: passing school clothes to the local school to be redistributed; circle of friends (parent and child; family members (cousins and siblings); colleagues; neighbours

The next section presents the findings utilising the framework of disposal modes provided by Albinsson & Perera (2009): sharing, exchanging (trading), donating, recycling and ridding (to landfill) from both an acquisition perspective as well as disposal.

## *Sharing*

Sharing resources within family and friend networks was the most common behaviour, and as expressed by participant-20 below, managing the household budget was not the primary motivation:

*We get a lot of hand-me-down clothes. We are very ethical and think about where [clothes] come from, who makes them and if they are made in China, in factories with child [labour]. I love the recycling aspect. [Our neighbours] pass a lot of girls' clothes to us. So, for my children, there is very little shopping in shops. And, because I have three children of the same sex, we recycle [clothing]. Even if I could afford to buy new for all of them, which we can't, I wouldn't, because I think the recycling aspect of it is just magic. (Participant-20)*

There was a lot of enthusiasm for the sharing networks, as illustrated above; one reason was that utilising clothing already produced reduces the requirement for further production and the additional stress this imposes on the environment, along with an opportunity to avoid allegations of, for example child labour, that are often linked to fashion production within the DSP. Primarily, the sharing network did not emerge from purchasing from second-hand clothing shops – it was mainly shared among mothering networks. Similarly, when looking to dispose of clothing the children had outgrown, the first consideration was for friends and family. The notion of familiarity of the networks and a shared ideology of making use of garments resonated with the participants and this endorsed the sharing behaviour. Yet, prior to disposal to landfill, other routes were considered such as the Salvation Army or charity shops to extend the longevity and to support other mothers. The ideology of sharing resources in order to meet social needs and the growth needs of participant-20 includes reusing garments for three daughters, which she terms as ‘*recycling*’ and that this is ‘*magic*’! She

speaks enthusiastically and confidently, and almost as secondary to the behaviour, recognises reusing garments helps to reduce the financial demand of having three children. Given her distaste for unjust market systems, she feels participating in the sharing-economy provides her with control for maximising resources and responsible disposal: she also passes on shoes and clothing to others when they are no longer required by the family. The idea of embracing behaviours that support the NEP were also expressed by participant-1, amid her frustration to make sense of what fashion production consists of:

*With food production there has been, awareness for years about the conditions of production and what you are actually contributing to. I think with food shopping now I've got it down to quite a fine art. I always try to buy Fairtrade products. There are companies that you know that aren't good to use and you don't use them. I feel that with clothes I don't really know. You see the name of the [production] country but it seems to me [that] everything is unethical. So, I avoid clothes shopping as much as I can. The children mainly wear hand-me-downs which is not just economical, I do think it's better. If you have got clothes within the family or circle of friends, then you are best to use them while they are still [in good-condition]. However, with my oldest child I can't do that anymore. She shops in the cheapest shops, buys far too many things and I get quite frustrated with her. I know that she likes to shop in Primark and I wouldn't shop there. (Participant-1)*

For participant-1, avoiding the DSP is drives her motivation to participate in the sharing-economy. She is despairing when questioning the veil behind fashion production, seeking implications from the country of production and unable to find assurance she chooses to disconnect, claiming that ‘*everything is unethical*’ which results in avoiding buying fashion for herself. Participant-20 also assumes that certain countries may implicate exploitation in

production and chooses sharing networks as an avoidance tactic. This approach is similar to a boycott (Ozanne & Ballantine, 2010) or voluntary-simplicity (Luchs et al., 2011); however, her children's continued growth necessitates consumption and the sharing-economy presents opportunities to align ideological and economical preferences. She believes that resource usage should be maximised within a sharing context, both accepting and passing on used-children's-clothing. Contrasting her ethical stance, she found that her teenage daughter (who was older than the other participants' children and more involved in fashion acquisition) was tempted by inexpensive fashion to keep up with current trends. Participant-1 expresses frustration that her daughter's consumption does not take into account the problems that arise from a '*throwaway society*' (Albinsson & Perera, 2009) and that she '*buys far too many things*' from a retailer alleged to engage in garment-worker exploitation. However, within the quote she also laments that lack of choice of ethically produced affordable fashion on the UK high street and the lack of guiding information.

Confusion over how to make sense of allegations to avoid exploitative production practice was a common discourse within the interviews. For example, participant-11 states that '*I want to buy the right things, but companies that have been in the news for being unethical, if they were continuing to be very unethical, there would be more in the news about it*'. This appears to provide assurance to participant-11 that if retailers are '*very*' unethical, NGO's will publicise their practice. However, it also indicates the general lack of understanding of what constitutes fashion production and presents a predilection to refer responsibility to the retailer. She was not alone in employing the strategy of '*not looking too closely*' (participant-3) at production policy, for fear that it may further reduce marketplace options. This situates responsibility for production as a passive role, deferred to the retailer, whereas post-consumption, the participants very much assumed an active role for responsible disposal that was considered the consumers' responsibility. Responsible disposal was actively pursued by

participant-4, who perceived value in her children's used-garments, and sought to pass on clothing her own children had outgrown to someone who may be feeling the strain of clothing provisioning: a social acquaintance, who was an unemployed single mother with three children. She explains her motivation below:

*I think that the family are not very well off, and so I bundle everything up and send a note saying, look feel free to sell this, because some of it is Boden type stuff, so sell it on eBay, [or] put it in the bin. Because I don't want to presume that she doesn't want the school tights or something. I wouldn't buy second-hand tights for my own kids, but if you have three kids and you are living on benefits, maybe actually you would. There's no reason not to if they are still in good nick (condition). (Participant-3)*

When considering disposal routes for clothes the children have outgrown, participant-4 considers how to maximise these resources within the sharing-economy. The value of resources emerges from the recognition that higher quality garments have an extended lifespan (some of the clothing was purchased from Boden, a UK mail order company that is renowned for quality): better quality clothing enables re-use and repair (Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2012; Luchs et al, 2011; Albinsson & Perera, 2009). Earlier in the interview, participant-4 described that her brother (a medical consultant) passed clothing from his sons and commented on the quality of this clothing; she explained that it had been worn by her two nephews before being passed to her two children and were still in a condition for further wear. Consequently, she recognised the market opportunity for reselling; she herself could have benefited financially, but felt that this acquaintance, another mother, would benefit more from either using the garments to clothe her children or reselling. She also does not make assumptions of what items may be considered useful, for example, school tights – so creates a bundle whilst recognising that some of the garments may be put 'in the bin' (ridding to



landfill). Although, this means she is passing responsibility for disposal, she also feels that she is supporting a family less well-off and this motivates her practice. All three quotes above emerge from a similar motivation to maximise resources, as conceptualised within the sharing-economy of passing used-garments to others within their immediate or peripheral communities. The first two quotes from participants 20 and 1 exhibit a distaste for the DSP and what are perceived as unjust market systems, allegations of exploitation and lack of production guidance. The sharing-economy provides altruism through avoiding the DSP and helps to reduce the financial burden of clothing children, which as described by participant-3, can provide practical support to others less well off. The appreciation of value in used-children's-garments also led to monetary exchanges, as explained in the next section.

### ***Exchanging (trading)***

As presented above, often clothing children had outgrown was still in a wearable condition and some participants saw this as an opportunity to recoup their expenses. Participant-21 explains below that she purchased used-cloth-nappies (diapers) that both her two sons had worn as babies. Given that disposable nappies are anticipated to cost over £1000 per child by the time they are two and a half years old (Canter, 2015) this is a considerable saving, particularly when selling on again.

*Nappies, I bought them second-hand and then I sold them on. I used them for two babies, so I felt that that was a benefit that I could relate, a tangible benefit to me. (Participant-21).*

Participant-21 recognised that the lifespan of the nappies could be extended and reselling them was considered '*tangible*': she felt she had saved money by not purchasing disposable nappies for both children, despite the increased costs of energy use, laundry detergent and her

labour cost. The concept of tangibility emerged as those costs are abstract and incorporated into wider aspects of the family budget. However, tangibility is supported by the images of nappies rotting in landfill sites; participant-21 had expressed her concerns regarding landfill during a discussion about recycled materials and recycling practice, stating: *'I think about [landfill] a lot, before I throw anything out'*. This had not only motivated her to use cloth nappies, but also contributed to her decision-making for other commodities, where consumption, use and disposal motivated participation in redistribution-markets. Similarly, for participant-14, redistribution-markets provided a way to benefit financially from disposing of a gift:

*We were given a Ralph Lauren red velvet dress with a white collar [for my daughter]. [I thought] I am never going to put my child in that, so I sold [it at] the twin's club nearly new sale and other people who have different tastes than me have snapped it up. (Participant-14)*

Although participant-14 did not see any value in the designer dress, she recognised that someone else would, and both benefited from the transaction: participant-14 gained money and the recipient gained a new designer dress at a reduced price. This situates value in used-children's clothing, making the most of resources, although it should be recognised that style tastes for children differ to that of teenagers and adults, as they are not subjected to as much to the temptation of new styles. Almost half of the participants used formal networks to dispose of used-children's-clothing and although only eight participants purchased used-children's-garments, those who did found it both a way to avoid the DSP and manage the household budget. Participant-26 was involved in organising a local National Childbirth Trust (NCT) sale and was motivated by the ideology of mothers coming together to share resources:

*NCT sales are really good, they are extremely busy, the demand for that kind of thing is there. You can get some good bargains. (Participant-26)*

Participant-26 spoke proudly of her involvement in NCT sales. NCT sales are illustrative of NEP activities that open opportunities for redistribution beyond immediate family and friends circle, to the collective-community sharing of child-related commodities, similar to the example of the toy library presented in the literature review above. In terms of social-class, the NCT community is considered affluent and this may result in higher quality brands of used-children's-clothing being redistributed. Yet it also illustrates the collegiality of mothers coming together to share the burden of provisioning where involvement is not only practical but of a shared ideology, motivated by altruism and community cohesiveness. For example, some participants were on committees that organised school sales for redistributing used-school-clothes. Participant-13 was an organiser of a local Nearly-New-Sale and she expressed that the event supported wider social and environmental benefits:

*It's one of these things that helps everybody, recycling goods. I am a huge believer in that sort of thing, making the most of what is already made, less reliant on scarce resources, reduced production and making clothing more affordable. (Participant-13)*

As the quote illustrates, participant-13 also refers to reusing clothing through redistribution-markets as 'recycling'. Later in the interview she discusses how recycling not only benefits families with affordable school-clothing and expands scarce resources beyond the use of one child, but provides funds for charities (including schools) and encourages community cohesiveness through the activity of mutual benefits. Low-cost children's clothing may compete with charity-shops and redistribution-markets, yet the participants narratives illustrate other values that motivate social exchange, such as the NEP to avoid the unjust

market systems prevalent within the DSP. It is the dual benefits of people and protection of the planet that embolden redistribution and recycling – collectively benefiting from what has already been produced in such a way as to preserve or enhance ‘*natural and human capital*’ which adds value to the activity (Martin & Schouten, 2014, P 18, cited in McDonagh & Prothero, 2014 p 1199). Consequently, involvement led to feelings of altruism that included benefiting the wider society, through donating commodities no longer required and belonging within a cohesive community; donating is further examined in the next section.

### *Donating*

Similar to participant-4 who was motivated to help a less affluent friend when disposing of used-children’s-garments, some participants sought charities who supported less-affluent families. When considering disposal routes for clothing no longer required by her children, participant-14 sought a worthy route:

*When the children were very little, I asked my health visitor where I could donate clothes so that they would go to families in-need, in (my local area); she directed me to the Salvation Army clothing depot. My understanding was, that [if you] need all the new born stuff, you could take what you needed. (Participant-14)*

Perhaps it is the inherent mixture of feelings experienced by mothering that include love, care and vulnerability that motivates participant-14 to want to help those experiencing deprivation during an important life stage, through easing the burden of acquiring related commodities in an act of solidarity, similar to the approach of participant-4. But it could also be a behaviour similar to Albinsson & Perera’s (2009) ‘packrats’, where the emotional attachment can be alleviated as the donation contributes to the social good. Some of the participants felt a reluctance to part with baby clothes, some kept favourite outfits, whereas participant-10 made

patchwork cushion covers from outgrown clothes to maintain memories. However, others were less emotionally attached and disposal was often motivated by limited storage space (Lamberton & Rose, 2012; Albinsson & Perera, 2009). One example of this was participant-16 who used charity-shops for commodities, including clothing for herself and her children; her quote describes the activity as similar to the toy library of borrowing what was needed and returned once she no longer required:

*It makes me feel [I am] getting a bargain, and also supporting the charity, you know it goes to a good cause and then I feel less guilty buying clothes more frequently. I will take it back to the charity-shop, partially because we don't have storage. For baby clothes, most of them are in such good condition and I would rather pass them on than stick them in a box, somebody else can wear them and [the charity] will get money for it again. (Participant-16)*

The quote from participant-16 illustrates the use of resources as a continuous loop, providing access to affordable used-children's-clothing and appreciating altruistically the social and environmental benefits of doing. Within this cycle of the NEP in action, money is donated to the charity and then clothing is re-donated to be resold, making the most of scarce resources and enabling the charity to operate. However, the examples above have focused on local networks, from family and friends to social/charitable networks such as NCT and school groups. Some participants recognised that their used-commodities could transcend local communities to benefit others who are less affluent from a global perspective. Below participant-8 explains her well thought through routes for disposing of commodities, by considering how best to help those in need:

*I have a whole range of sources for my clothes, some go to charity-shops, some go to friends, some go to shoe people, there's a place that will take bras for overseas*

*ladies, there's a special place for all my glasses, that's overseas as well. I'm a great believer for giving them to friends and getting them from friends. I never, ever throw anything out, it's always recycled or given away. I'm so anal about it, I won't waste. We've got no compulsion about using or buying from [the charity-shop]. But we have some friends, that say you don't want to be telling people, you got that out of there [laughs]. Of course you do, why not. there's nothing wrong with it anyway. The difference is, and it's a fundamental difference, is whether you have to get something out of a charity shop. (Participant-8)*

Participant-8 makes a number of points: not only are her unused-goods beneficial, particularly to people with limited access to commodities in developing countries, but she is active and considerate in thinking through who will benefit most, utilising NEP networks. She assumes control through those disposal routes, but also through accepting used-clothing for her children; in this way, she is able to limit her contribution to unfair market systems. However, she ends by stating that this choice is not motivated by financial need, rather it is motivated by choice and her belief in making the most of the resources, and this facilitates her pleasure in the active role. This is an important aspect, as accepting hand-me-downs can be considered as an inability to afford new goods, and as indicated in the quote above, this is not something that consumers would inform others of. However, the participants' narratives illustrate an ideology that favours protection of natural resources and avoiding exploitative practice as transcending concern for presenting their economic status through their appearance. Additionally, although second-hand, often used-children's-garments are of a higher quality, which enables reuse. Moreover, the narratives suggest a change in societal discourse that values sustainability as a progressive movement and encourages participation in social innovative partnerships and community cohesion (Sali & Ellingstad, 2016). However, sharing and donating behaviours were possible as the garments were still in a

wearable condition, whereas oftentimes clothing was not donated due to poor condition or damage. The next section will consider the destination of worn-used-clothing.

### *Recycling and ridding*

As illustrated in the previous sections, the discourse around recycling had permeated from other consumption contexts to fashion and had situated resources as scarce which nudged consumers to reconsider sending waste to landfill (Prothero et al., 2011; Ritch et al., 2009). As illustrated in some of the quotes above and the one below, passing on used-children's-clothing was framed as recycling:

*We recycle a lot, at the moment, it gets handed down from [my eldest son], down to [my middle son], down to [my youngest son], in fact, there is a big circle of us and we all just seem to pass on stuff. (Participant-28)*

Of course, the practice of reusing clothing within families was routine historically, but inexpensive commodities and persuasive marketing have altered consumer expectations to encourage preferences for new products. Consequently, the participants viewed using commodities more than once as recycling; even, as illustrated in the above quote, describing handing down clothes within an immediate family. This terminology expanded to children re-using the same school bag for more than one school year (participant-19). Although some consumers may expect to use a commodity until it is too worn to be acceptable, consumer expectations are encouraged by retailers' seasonal campaigns and price offers to purchase new school clothes and related accessories at the beginning of each school year. This is illustrative of marketing encouraging more frequent consumption that is driven by desire rather than need, acting as an antithesis to sustainability. Therefore, to re-use (or continue to

use) products was considered as resisting consumer culture expectations and marketing campaigns that represent the DSP, a similar approach to voluntary simplicity.

As depicted in Table 3, none of the participants were involved in solely in redistributing used children's garments, either within friend and family groups (passing and receiving) or commercially (buying and selling). rather, it was a behaviour that provided another option to avoid the DSP. Additionally, it should be recognised that ridding to landfill is the quickest and easiest option available for disposal and yet no participant admitted to this route. This may be a consequence of awareness of landfill pollution, alongside recycling used-textiles through charities and textile bins in car parks, as explained below:

*I don't throw out any clothes at all, if I am finished with them, they either go to the charity-shop or bagged for recycling. (Participant-25)*

*I am very much aware of landfill, not just to do with clothes, but waste in general. I either recycle or I have made (used-children's clothing) into cushion covers. (Participant-10)*

The quotes above are illustrative of the participants' awareness to reduce what is sent to landfill and that they seek alternative and sustainable routes for disposing textiles. Of course, it also demonstrates that sending textiles to landfill is socially unacceptable especially as this was not disclosed. As evidenced, initially they would seek routes where others can make good use of those resources, and once the garments are un-wearable, value is still perceived in the materials through fundraising for charity.



## Concluding discussion

The research sought to explore how consumers define, deliberate and incorporate concerns for sustainability, with a focus on acquiring and disposing of fashion within the family setting. Through utilising Albinsson & Perera's (2009) framework, this paper has presented examples of consumer led social innovation initiatives that span collaborative-consumption, the sharing-economy and redistribution-markets. Participating in redistribution-markets provided practical access to affordable used-children's-garments, along with preferences that the activities acknowledge the wider social and environmental benefits of reusing resources and avoiding further contribution to landfill. Underpinning the activities was concern for the unjust market systems represented in the DSP that do not respond to the sustainability agenda. The participants expressed the complexity of avoiding clothing that was produced equitably, which led to disengagement and uncertainty; this contrasted with the NEP redistribution-markets activities in which they were actively involved, particularly when disposing of garments' that the children had outgrown. Assuming responsibility for post-consumption provided creative interpretations of what was the best disposal route that appealed to their moral ideology, and the participants harnessed their social networks to determine pathways that were sustainable and offered social and consumer value (Ozanne & Ballantine, 2010). This exemplifies social innovation initiatives as a response to control and manage the associated negative consequences of consumption (Phipps et al., 2012).

The research moves beyond consumption orientated behaviours to illustrate that consumer behaviours have been informed by advances in the sustainability agenda, as encouraged by societal messages and grassroots movements. The research illustrates that consumers are developing links between recycling campaigns and production cycles where they interpret and modify their behaviours. Consequently, contributing to the redistribution-activities in

social settings acts as a step change that progresses ideological intent to support sustainability through new mechanisms of distribution, encapsulated within social innovation exchange. This step change highlights that although sustainable consumption may not always be possible, commodity ownership instigates notions of responsibility to either extend the use of materials or dispose of garments in such a way that limits impacting on the environment negatively. A step change was evident in the way in which hand-me-down or sharing children's clothes and other related commodities had transgressed to 'recycling', adopting the term from other recycling behaviours where the intent is to avoid contributing to landfill by maximising the materials in some form. This step change also shifts the impetus of hand-me-down clothing as moving beyond frugality, or an inability to afford new commodities, to making a positive contribution to wider social justice issues. Understanding this step change offers ways in which social marketing can be positioned to further advance the sustainability agenda, as well as suggesting that fashion retailers should address the issues to reflect awareness of consumer trends. This could include ways in which social innovation initiatives can be designed to appeal to consumer ideological preferences.

As redistribution practice occurred within social networks, it was not only perceived as the sharing of commodities, but as sharing attitudes and values. The sharing of values was anticipated within the research design as the snowballing technique had the aim of delving deeper into the lifeworlds of this specific cohort. Most of the participants professed their desire to do the 'right' thing for their children's well-being as well as wider society. However, the social networks in which the participants belonged to may have encouraged involvement with collaborative-consumption and redistribution-markets. For example, participant-2 was much younger than the other participants and tended to purchase more fast-fashion for herself. This practice was assimilated in purchasing clothing for her daughter and there was less reliance on used-clothing networks; primarily as her main friend-circles were

yet to have families. Other participants illustrated the importance of networks as influencing their behaviours.

As the participants all worked in professional occupations there is an assumption of affluence; however, this was not always reflected in their narratives and mainly the participants relied on low-cost children's clothing as well as redistribution-markets to manage the household budget. Although the sample criteria stipulated mothers who worked in a professional occupation and whose children were 12 years old and under, this was the only commonality and the participants varied in lifestyles, social values, interest in fashion, finances, weekly working hours, and most importantly, their knowledge and concern for sustainability. As such, there was much diversity in their narratives when discussing fashion involvement, household management and in particular concern for the environment and worker conditions, despite research noting greater sustainable engagement with middle-class consumers (McClean and McEachern, 2002). This leads to the assumption that sharing behaviours were informed by understanding the emotional and practical aspects of the mothering role. It also illustrates new classifications of sustainable behaviours that are consumer-led, rather than market-led, which view provisioning as a social role, that supports others less well off as well. This may be the result of a confidence in the participants social standing that sharing networks were not illustrative of their inability to purchase new clothing; rather, it was considered more important that they were demonstrating positive contributions to the sustainability agenda. Additionally, for some participants, their social-class ideology may have instigated their urge to support other mothers who may be unable to access commodities as an act of philanthropy.

The notion of combining positive resourcing for the family, supporting friends and wider social circles with access to commodities, as well as wider societal benefits offered a win-win

solution. Shared networks of socially innovative initiatives also propel shared ideologies where the sharing ethos of passing on loved clothing to someone who is likely to dispose of the garment responsibly further endorses participation, as was also evident in the research by Albinsson & Perera (2012). Moreover, shared networks advance sustainability discourse to promote the agenda: consumers are somewhat limited to purchasing clothing that is available in retail outlets, especially as sustainably produced fashion is more expensive, not convenient to access (most are online retailers, rather than the high street therefore incur postal charges) and not considered as following fashion trends. Although consumers purchase what is available, retailers supply what they think consumers want and this may be a mismatch in ideology. As such, redistribution-markets and shared-networks offer alternative models of exchange, often with the added benefit of creating like-minded communities and supporting charitable work.

The desire to create a better society is indicative of mothers collectively working together to benefit one another, and can be seen in campaigns to gather clothing for refugees escaping the Syrian crisis. In a commercial context, in 2015 JoJo Maman Bébé (French children's retailer) organised a peer-to-peer initiative called 'From a mother to another' requesting donations of used-children's clothing for Barnardo's Children's charity (Tenison, 2015), highlighting the potential for social innovative partnership (Sali & Ellingstad, 2016). The sharing of values and empathy for other women provides examples of peer-to-peer networks that transcend behaviours to include values and shape changing practice (Grønhøj & Ölander, 2007). Lamberton & Rose (2012) postulate whether the sharing-economy can move into a commercial context, as they found little motivation for car, bicycle and mobile phone data sharing-services. Yet, given the involvement of the participants in collaborative-consumption, this could transfer to commercial markets that appeal to values through preserving '*natural and human capital*' (Martin & Schouten, 2014, P 18, cited in McDonagh

& Prothero, 2014 p 1199). This suggests that understanding how to motivate sustainability has traction, where value is perceived in maximising resources. An example of this would be the Swedish shopping mall with 14 stores that only sell recycling commodities from clothes to household goods (Shaw, 2019). Sustainable values could also be assimilated in value created marketing. For example, the M&S Plan A initiative addresses transparency in production through the use of eco-factories in Sri Lanka that address employability rights and carbon-neutral production. This educates consumers about how fashion production compromises sustainability, and ways in which retailers are proactive in advancing the sustainability agenda. This could expand to labels explaining that garments are made from recycled materials (for example, pineapple waste can be made into imitation leather; plastic bottles can be made into fleece fabric), trading or discounts for returning used-clothes, to either sell second-hand or to be recycled into new fabrics which '*widen[s] the circle and pleasure of ownership and utility*' (Albinsson & Perera, 2012 p. 309). Another potential outcome could be renting clothing to manage children's continued growth: Danish brand Vigga offers members access to children's clothing from new-born collections throughout the child's growth (BBC News, 2017). All the clothes are made from organic and sustainable fibres and once returned, they are environmentally cleaned and repaired; although this service is only available in Denmark, there is the potential to extend this in other countries. These sustainable innovation initiatives provide alternative distribution mechanisms that disrupt traditional markets. There will always be the need for consumption, either from a desired or need perspective, and therefore, boycotting or voluntary-simplicity has a limited role in controlling distaste for unjust markets. However, fashion retailers could also capitalise on advancing the sustainability agenda, by enabling transparency in production and embracing social innovation activities, either as a core activity to the business or through supporting

charities. In this way, business can appeal through altruism to obtain competitive advantage and will benefit from an alignment with consumer ideology.

### ***Limitations and future research***

Although the narrow sampling criteria limits generalisations as to the representativeness of the findings, it does illuminate upon the lifeworlds of the participants; it could be assumed that these middle-class mothers had a disposable income that allowed flexibility, yet they reported on careful financial management. Another limitation is that the voices of the children were not heard and it would be interesting to explore how children feel about the shared economy and hand-me-down clothing. Another interesting avenue for research would be socio-economic and cultural contexts. In terms of future research, it would be interesting to explore the transition through the baby-years and toddler stage to focus on what leads to the disposal of goods and garments, particularly as there seems to be an increase of redistribution-markets such as the Jack and Jill market where consumers can post and sell used-commodities (both physical and online) in the UK (Wilson, 2011). Additionally, it would be advantageous to focus on ownership and age, to identify whether notions of sharing or renting fashion in similar ways to which the toy library operates, would either address concerns for sustainability or enable access to premium brands to retain the importance of ownership in constructing identity (Belk, 2010). This would enable market opportunities for expanding social innovation within commercial contexts.

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